Summer 2017 - Issue 68

The Rehabilitator

BWRC NEWSLETTER

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Garden Wildlife Health including ranavirus and cryptosporidium

A modern day concern and a mysterious message from the past

Hedgehogs, hedgehogs and more hedgehogs!

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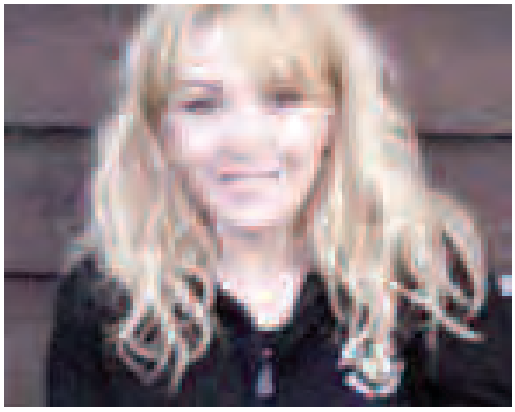
Cover photo: Common frog (Rana temporaria) courtesy of Zoological Society of London.

A word from the Chair

Welcome to the summer edition of The Rehabilitator! In this issue we will be reporting on the recent Garden Wildlife Health Day held in Cambridge, and also giving more details of this year's BWRC Symposium at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in Edinburgh.

BWRC Trustees are pleased to welcome RSPCA Scientific Officer (Wildlife) Llewelyn Lowen as new trustee. Llewelyn joins us as his colleague Adam Grogan, recently promoted to Head of Wildlife at the RSPCA, takes a step back in order to focus on his new professional responsibilities. On behalf of the trustees, I would like to thank Adam for his previous and continuing support. His extensive knowledge and contacts in the field of wildlife rehabilitation have been incredibly valuable to BWRC during his 17 years on the committee!

Congratulations from BWRC to associate member Sue Schwar who was recently given the RSPCA's Lord Erskine Silver Award for outstanding contribution to animal welfare. Sue is founder and manager of South Essex Wildlife Hospital near Orsett, where she works tirelessly to help wildlife casualties, train volunteers and gives talks to community and student groups to raise awareness of the plight of UK wildlife.



Congratulations to BWRC associate member Sue Schwar

Commiserations are due to the Bat Conservation Trust who have recently reported that Natural England are unlikely to continue to support the Helpline Bat Advice Service when the current

contract ends this autumn. For more details and how to have your say, see the BCT Joint Chief Executives Statement on the BCT website **(http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/worrying_changes_proposed_to_the_natural_england_helpine_bat_advice_service.html).**

Also in this issue we have a message from the 1980s and a letter to BWRC regarding what many perceive as the inadequate legal protection of UK hedgehogs, as well as reviews of research work done and reminders of two on-going surveys.

As always, if you have news or views you would like to share please contact us via our website – **www.bwrc.org.uk .**

Terri Amory
BWRC Chair

Tickets available through Eventbrite (web address)

21 October
Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, Edinburgh

- **DEFRA Badger translocation study**
- **Hedgehog survey results**
- **Triage and decision making**
- **Bat rehabilitation**
- **Work of RSPCA Wildlife Officers**
- **New BVZS Guidelines & BSAVA Manual of Wildlife Casualties**

and much more!!!

BWRC Symposium 2017

Garden Wildlife Health Day

Terri Amory (BWRC Chair)

On 1st June, Garden Wildlife Health – a collaborative project between the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), and Froglife hosted a day conference in the wonderful David Attenborough Building in Cambridge.

In the first session, Professor Andrew Cunningham from the Institute of Zoology (IoZ) gave a historical perspective on the development of garden wildlife disease surveillance in Great Britain, from early ad hoc reporting, through more organised work on phocine (seal) distemper starting in 2002 and launch of the Garden Bird Health Initiative (GBHI) in 2005, which built on the back of the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) National Bird Survey, and led to the discovery of trichomoniasis in finch species. In 2013 the scope of the GBHI was extended to reptiles and hedgehogs regular Garden Wildlife Health Forum meetings between stakeholder organisations ensued.

Kate Risely, who runs the BTO's Garden Birdwatch Scheme, explained the development and scope of the scheme and the benefits of 'citizen science' – in this case large numbers of volunteers submitting weekly reports of birds recorded in a fixed time and space (usually their own garden) over twenty years in some cases. Questions on disease and mortality incidents were built in to the BTO survey, including the option to report NO such observations, and the organisations developed the capacity to

provide veterinary feedback and advice to regular and ad hoc reporters on the nature of issues reported and appropriate action that might be taken (such as regular disinfection of feeding stations).

Dr Kevin Tyler from the University of East Anglia and Dr Rob Robinson from BTO then rounded off the first session with a focus on the emergence of evidence of Trichomoniasis in finches (commonly known as “canker” in columbids and “frounce” in raptors) including Dr Becki Lawson’s PhD work to identify the particular strain of T. gallinaea found to be causing pathology in UK birds. Dr Robinson went on to describe the epidemiology of the disease as its appearance resulted in large reductions in recorded numbers of greenfinch numbers, particularly in the West Midlands in 2006/07, and then an eastward shift in 2008. Trichomoniasis is thought to have caused more than a 50% reduction in greenfinch numbers across the UK over a 10 year period, with the possible consequence of a reduction in sparrowhawk numbers (to be confirmed).

In the second session, Dr Becki Lawson from ZSL highlighted the benefits of wildlife disease surveillance and outlined key findings on other endemic and emerging diseases of British garden birds that have emerged over the last decade, including avian pox (thought to have been introduced from Europe via migration, due to its gradual spread from the south-east of England), salmonellosis (both introduced and endemic strains) and endemic chlamydiosis. The importance of hygienic maintenance of garden bird feeding stations was highlighted in relation to these conditions.

Professor Andrew Cunningham continued the session by describing current infectious threats to amphibian health in Great Britain. These include -

- Redleg' - a ranavirus which causes systemic haemorrhaging and skin ulceration thought to have been introduced from North America in the 1980s (For more detail see the next article in this newsletter "Ranavirus in the UK – what do we know so far?").
- 'Candlewax disease' – herpes virus first identified in Italy and first reported in Devon in 1997
- Two forms of amphibian Chytridiomycosis –

  Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis (Bd) – the worst infectious disease ever recorded in vertebrates, Bd has already caused extinctions abroad. Has been found in wild amphibians at more than 120 sites in the UK but thought to be multipoint introductions – no evidence of spreading ormass mortality has been recorded so far.

  Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans (Bs) – brought in to captive populations by alpine newts, has not been found in the wild in the UK yet but will affect Great-crested newts

Dr Becki Lawson (ZSL) went on to highlight the lack of reptile samples being sent in to the Garden Wildlife Health scheme in comparison with bird and other vertebrate samples. Becki also gave a preview of work about to be published in the journal Nature on a newly discovered European form of fungal disease causing blistering of the skin of snakes. This disease is considered of

This paper is newly available online – *"Emerging fungal pathogen Ophidiomyces ophiodiicola in wild European snakes"*, Franklinos et al., Scientific Reports7, Article number:3844 (2017). **https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-017-03352-1**

conservation concern in eastern North America where it has been isolated in 30 different snake species. However genetic studies show the European form to be distinct.

In the third session, Dr Lawson went on to describe studies of hedgehog disease that have been carried out since the Garden Bird Health Initiative was extended to other wildlife in 2013. A number of wildlife rehabilitation centres have contributed carcases and faecal samples, and this collaboration was recognised has having been extremely useful. Infections discovered include –

- Salmonella enteriditis (endemic to the UK) which is thought to have caused outbreaks of diarrhoea in casualties in care
- Streptococcus pyogenes – normally associated with “strep throat” in humans, this was the first and only case in a wild mammal – thought most likely to be a case of reverse zoonosis!
- Herpes virus – thought to be endemic and found to be widespread
- Coronavirus – no signs of clinical disease associated
- Cryptosporidium – again no clinical disease

Hedgehog samples also demonstrated internal parasites, poisoning (slug pellets), and signs of predation and RTA trauma. None of these were considered significant enough to individually explain the declining hedgehog population in the UK, but multiple infections were found to be common in individual animals, and workers identified a need to look at more fresh (rather than frozen) samples.

Chief Executive Officer of Froglife, Kathy Wormwald, shared analysis of e-mails that the charity has received, identifying a marked concern for the welfare of individual animals as well as the conservation of species.

Bob Elliot, RSPB's Head of Investigations, shared some of his interesting experiences (and photos) in his work investigating wildlife crime, including that related to recently reintroduced species such as white-tailed eagles and red kites, other raptors subject to persecution such as hen harriers, and rare species such as turtle doves and corncrake. He also drew attention to the RSPB's contribution to WILDCOMS – the Wildlife Disease and Contaminant Monitoring and Surveillance Network – a collaboration of various UK surveillance schemes including the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme (WIIS – representatives presented a workshop at our 2014 Symposium in Dumfries) and Garden Wildlife Health.

Paul Duff veterinary lead for the Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA - an executive agency of DEFRA) Wildlife Expert Group completed the day's presentations with a review of the work of the APHA Diseases of Wildlife Scheme (DoWS) which has delivered national surveillance for wildlife disease in England and Wales to government since 1998. In 2009, surveillance for vertebrate (apart from cetaceans) wildlife disease in GB became the responsibility of the Great Britain Wildlife Disease Surveillance Partnership, chaired by APHA DoWS. Surveillance priorities include:

- rabbit haemorrhagic disease
- Chytrid fungus Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans (Bs affecting newts as described earlier)
- Hantavirus in rats (zoonotic)
- Echinococcus in beaver (zoonotic)
- Red squirrel pox virus
- Environmental pollution (wildlife can be a useful flag for pollution issues)

Potential positive and negative roles of wildlife rehabilitation were mentioned during the course of the day including the potential for the translocation of rehabilitated animals to spread disease, but also of course the opportunity that rehabilitators have to identify and report disease in wild individuals and contribute samples to archives.

BWRC accepted an invitation to become a GWH Forum organisation, and so representatives will be attending biannual update meetings.

Ranavirus in the UK – what do we know so far?

V. Wilkinson, BVetMed, MSc, MRCVS,
Wildlife Veterinarian, Institute of Zoology,
Zoological Society of London

Amphibians around the world are facing multiple threats, with many species experiencing population declines and extinctions. Key factors driving these global declines include climate change, habitat loss, invasive species and infectious disease.

Photo: Froglife

Ranavirus, an infectious agent threatening our native amphibians, is thought to have been introduced to Great Britain (GB) in the early 1990s, with ranavirus disease first identified in south east England.

Although there are multiple types of ranavirus, Frog-virus 3 is the strain currently found in GB. The common frog (Rana temporaria) is the species most frequently reported with ranavirus disease, with marked local population declines of the species being recorded in some affected ponds. Although other species of native amphibian can become infected, such as the common toad (Bufo bufo), it is thought that they are less susceptible to the disease than common frogs. In addition to amphibians, the Frog-virus 3 strain can also cause fatal disease in pet tortoises (Testudo spp.), and affect a variety of captive fish and

reptile species. However, the virus is yet to be confirmed causing disease in wild fish and reptiles in GB, and there is no known risk to human, other mammal or bird health.

Ranavirus disease in British common frogs typically affects adult animals, unlike in North America where metamorphs and tadpoles are more commonly involved, with outbreaks usually occurring in the warmer summer months when amphibians are active. The signs of a ranavirus outbreak can vary from single sick animals to events where numerous amphibians die within a short period of time, sometimes without any apparent symptoms. If sick animals are seen, they are often lethargic and may show signs of skin ulceration, digit loss and/ or bloody mucous in the mouth or from the rectum. It is worth noting however that none of these symptoms are diagnostic of ranavirus, and specialist laboratory testing is required. At present, there is no known treatment for the disease, and as a result of its highly infectious nature, and its ability to survive in the environment for extended periods of time, ranavirus is challenging to control.

In Britain, surveillance for ranavirus has been conducted since the early 1990s, and at present all amphibians submitted for post-mortem examination to the Garden Wildlife Health (GWH) project at the Institute of Zoology are tested for ranavirus. Since its emergence in the country, amphibian mortalities consistent with ranavirus disease have been recorded with the disease range spreading north and west throughout England. A recent study by Price et al. (2016) indicates that this spread has occurred as a result of both natural amphibian dispersal and the human movement of infected amphibians and/or contaminated materials, such as boots, water and plant-life.

Whilst common frogs are uncommon wildlife casualties, it is useful for rehabilitators to be aware of ranavirus as a potential cause of sickness and mortality in amphibians, particularly as members of

the public may report their observations to the centres that deal with wildlife casualties. In such instances rehabilitators can assist in a number of ways, through: encouraging members of the public to report sightings of sick/dead amphibians to GWH via the website www.gardenwildlifehealth.org to investigate the cause and track outbreaks when they occur; informing reporters of the potential risks of ranavirus to native amphibians and captive reptiles; and, advising members of the public on how they can help to minimise the risk of introducing ranavirus to new areas and disease-free wild populations of amphibians. In general, this can be achieved by: removing dead wild amphibians from water-bodies and burying them locally rather than at a distant site; refraining from introducing any potentially infected animals or materials to new sites; ensuring thorough cleaning and disinfection of equipment between site visits for people who undertake field work; and, allowing new ponds to colonise naturally rather than moving spawn between sites.

Photo: Zoological Society of London

As we are now entering summer in Britain, we are likely to see the typical seasonal increase in the number of ranavirus outbreaks. We hope that by working alongside rehabilitators to raise awareness of the risks of ranavirus disease, and the steps we can take to curtail its spread, we can help to safeguard the health of amphibian populations throughout Great Britain.

References

Price, S.J., Garner, T.W., Cunningham, A.A., Langton, T.E. and Nichols, R.A. (2016) Reconstructing the emergence of a lethal infectious disease of wildlife supports a key role for spread through translocations by humans. Proc. R. Soc. B 283(1839): 20160952.

Two studies of Cryptosporidium in hedgehogs

(Summaries by Dr Dan Forman, BWRC & Swansea University)

Surveillance was conducted for the occurrence of protozoan parasites of the genus Cryptosporidium in European hedgehogs (Erinaceus europaeus) in Great Britain. In total, 108 voided faecal samples were collected from hedgehogs newly admitted to eight wildlife casualty treatment and rehabilitation centres. Terminal large intestinal (LI) contents from three hedgehog carcasses were also analysed. Information on host and location variables, including faecal appearance, body weight, and apparent health status, was compiled. Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) targeting the 18S ribosomal RNA gene, confirmed by sequencing, revealed an 8% (9/111) occurrence of Cryptosporidium parvum in faeces or LI contents, with no significant association between the host or location variables and infection. Archived small intestinal (SI) tissue from a hedgehog with histological evidence of cryptosporidiosis was also positive for C. parvum by PCR and sequence analysis of the 18S rRNA gene. No other Cryptosporidium species were detected. PCR and sequencing of the glycoprotein 60 gene identified three known zoonotic C. parvum subtypes not previously found in hedgehogs: IIdA17G1 (n=4), IIdA19G1 (n=1) and IIdA24G1 (n=1). These subtypes are also known to infect livestock. Another faecal sample contained C. parvum IIcA5G3j which has been

found previously in hedgehogs, and for which there is one published report in a human, but is not known to affect livestock. The presence of zoonotic subtypes of C. parvum in British hedgehogs highlights a potential public health concern. Further research is needed to better understand the epidemiology and potential impacts of Cryptosporidium infection in hedgehogs.

"The presence of zoonotic subtypes of C. parvum in British hedgehogs highlights a potential public health concern."

Reference

Sangster, L., Blake, D., Robinsonc, G., Hopkins, T., Sa, R., Cunninghama, A., Chalmers, R., Lawson, B. Detection and molecular characterisation of Cryptosporidium parvum in British European hedgehogs (Erinaceus europaeus). Veterinary Parasitology. 217: 39–44.

This study describes cryptosporidiosis in an overwintering group of 15 European hedgehogs (Erinaceus europaeus), comprising 3 adults and 12 juveniles. Four juvenile hedgehogs were hospitalised with anorexia, malodorous diarrhoea and dehydration. Immediate parasitological examinations revealed the presence of Cryptosporidium sp. in these animals and also in 5 other juveniles. All hedgehogs were coproscopically monitored for 4 months over the winter season. Shedding of Cryptosporidium oocysts persisted from 6 to 70 days. Repeated shedding of Cryptosporidium oocysts occurred in 3 animals after 4 months subsequent to the first outbreak. Clinical signs were observed only at the beginning of the outbreak (apathy, anorexia, general weakness, mild dehydration, and malodorous faeces with changed consistence –

"Cryptosporidium infections can be rapidly spread among debilitated animals and the positive hedgehogs released back into the wild can be a source of the infection for individuals weakened after hibernation."

soft/diarrhoea) in the 4 hospitalised juveniles. Overall 11 hedgehogs were Cryptosporidium-positive, both microscopically and by PCR methods. Sequence analyses of SSU rRNA and gp60 genes revealed the presence of C. parvumIIdA18G1 subtype in all positive hedgehogs. Moreover, 3 hedgehogs had a mixed infection of the zoonotic C. parvum and C. erinacei XIIIaA19R13 subtype. Cryptosporidium infections can be rapidly spread among debilitated animals and the positive hedgehogs released back into the wild can be a source of the infection for individuals weakened after hibernation.

Reference

Hofmannováa,L., Hauptmanc,K., Huclovád,K., Květoňováe, D., Sake,B. & Kváče, M. 2016. Cryptosporidium erinacei and C. parvum in a group of overwintering hedgehogs. European Journal of Protistology. 56: 15–20.

Hedgehog Rehabilitation Survey -

To contribute to the study please visit
http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/HedgehogRehab/

Lucy Bearman-Brown MRes, PGCE, BSc (Hons), SFHEA University Centre, Hartpury, Gloucester.

As you're probably aware, hedgehogs are declining at an alarming rate, with populations between a third and a half of what they were in 2000. Whilst there is extensive ecological research investigating the cause of this decline, there has been little focus on the collaborative approach required to help save this charismatic species. We'd like to address this by exploring the role wildlife hospitals and rehabilitators play in this complex situation.

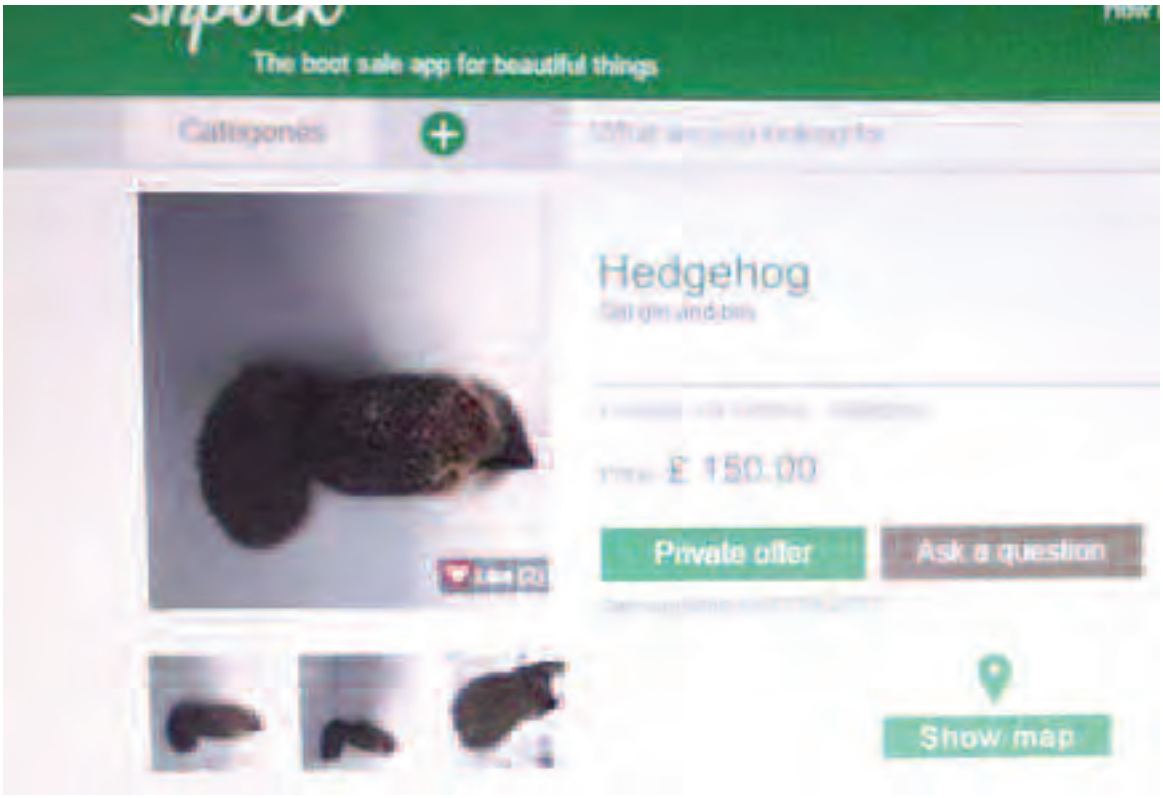
This study will be the largest survey to date of hedgehogs in rehabilitation, and aims to understand a range of factors influencing their admission, treatment and survival. We have kept this survey as short as possible, whilst also trying to gain as much benefit from this unique opportunity. It will ask for some data regarding previous admissions, and it should take 15-30 minutes.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. If you'd like to know any more about this, please contact Lucy.Bearman-Brown@hartpury.ac.uk., doctoral researcher and lecturer at Hartpury University Centre in Gloucestershire, working in partnership with University of Reading, People's Trust for Endangered Species and British Hedgehog Preservation Society.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sirs

I am hopeful that you can offer some advice on our native hedgehogs. I was recently sent a copy of an advert that was placed on the Shpock website – the advert clearly showed that they had a male and female wild hedgehog which were being offered for sale at £ 150.00.



I have worked with the wildies for several years now and help to raise funds and to care and rehabilitate them back where they belong and I was led to believe that is was illegal to have these in captivity unless their disability made it impossible to return to the wild and they could be housed in a secure garden where supplementary feeding and observations of them could continue.

As per a wildlife organisation – I contacted the local police force to the area and they referred me back to the RSPCA – I rang them and as agreed I sent over all the information, photos of adverts, the address where they were being kept and the advertising site they were on.

Didn't hear anything back for a couple of weeks but when they came back to me they said nothing illegal had taken place as it was perfectly legal to sell hedgehogs – I queried this as I know you can legally sell and African Pygmy Hedgehog – the person on the end of the phone was not willing to discuss it further as his Inspector had made the ruling nothing illegal had taken place.

Surely, as a protected wildlife species this is not allowed – it goes against how they should be kept – all hedgehogs are solitary, they were healthy from the photos I saw, but they belong in the wild and not even in an enclosed garden.

All the wild hedgehog rescues are doing their utmost to get injured/ poorly/ orphaned hedgehogs back where they belong for some idiot to put a pair up for sale – I cannot get my head around it at all.

Any help or advice would really be appreciated

Best Regards

Helen Gill

Thank you very much for your letter Helen. No doubt 99% of our readers share your views that hedgehogs SHOULD be protected. However the RSPCA advised you correctly about the legislation. Head of Wildlife at the RSPCA Adam Grogan explains – "Hedgehogs are only partially protected, so you can't set a trap to trap them or put down poisons for them, but it is not illegal for you to pick them up and sell them. We cannot do anything unless a law is broken or unless the member of the public [selling the hedgehogs] is willing to talk to us and we

persuade them to see our point of view."

Last year there was a petition by Hedgehog Street and MP Oliver Colville to push for an increase in legal protection by including hedgehogs in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (still visible at **https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/new-hedgehog-petition/**) which would protect hedgehogs from possession and sale.

Unfortunately the petition closed in August 2016 with 50,399 signatures, and the Government's response was –

"We support measures to help hedgehogs. We do not believe it is appropriate to list hedgehogs as a protected species, which is best reserved for species deliberately killed or injured by humans."

On reviewing the species listed in Schedule 5, this argument seems rather thin – as well as mammals (most of which it could be argued have been persecuted at some point – but that also applies to hedgehogs!) the list also includes all native reptiles and amphibians and a long list of both terrestrial and marine invertebrate species, some of which it seems unlikely are "deliberately killed or injured by humans"? Are these therefore on schedule 5 for conservation reasons? Given that, due to mounting evidence of a sharp population decline the hedgehog was declared a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority conservation species as far back as 2007, further pressure on Government to make this change might be worth the effort.

Veterinary treatment of fox casualties

Llewelyn Lowen, BWRC and RSPCA

The red fox (Vulpes vulpes) is a widespread and commonly encountered species throughout Britain. Their generalist, opportunistic nature has allowed them to successfully populate habitats of all kinds across the country. Their success however, particularly in urban and suburban habitats, also makes them a common wildlife casualty.

Photos courtesy of RSPCA

Unlike wildlife rehabilitation facilities, many private veterinary practices have little or no experience in dealing with wild animals and many practising vets will treat casualty foxes in the same way as they would domestic dogs. Whilst this may work with regard to much of the medical or surgical treatment available, the behaviour and ecology of foxes differs significantly from that of domestic dogs. It is important that these differences are accounted for by veterinary practices, in order to protect the welfare of the fox and improve the chances of successful rehabilitation and eventual release.

A study published last year in the journal In Practice aimed at identifying key aspects of rehabilitating fox casualties presented at practices. The study reviewed the natural history and behaviour of red foxes, housing and Photos courtesy of RSPCA feeding, handling and clinical examination, first aid, anaesthesia and analgesia, routine investigations, common conditions,

orphaned and abandoned cubs, and the release of adults and hand-reared cubs.

Appropriate housing is a key dimension in distinguishing the needs of a casualty fox from those of a domestic dog, particularly with regard to physical resources. The authors identify a clear need for foxes to be housed in quiet areas, away from dogs (who are perceived as predators) and with minimal contact with humans (to reduce taming in cubs). Whilst standard pet carriers/kennels and roofed walk-in kennels (for cubs and adults respectively) are deemed appropriate for short-term treatment, long-term rehabilitation will require more specialist, outside runs or pens (particularly soft release pens for fox cubs).

The collection of an accurate history is critical; some symptoms (such as behavioural or locomotive abnormalities) may be difficult to assess when the animal is in the consulting room. Additionally, unlike domestic dogs, adult foxes will need to be returned to their original territory where possible, and so the vet will need to establish and record exactly where the animal was found.

Photos courtesy of RSPCA

As foxes can act as wildlife reservoirs for zoonoses (e.g. sarcoptic mange or leptospirosis) and can bite on occasion, the authors identify the appropriate PPE as well as useful handling techniques.

It is important to remember that unlike domestic dogs, the aim of an examination is casualty foxes is to assess the suitability for rehabilitation and release. Consequently, during the initial assessment vets will need to consider euthanasia if the fox is not fit to survive when put back into the wild, or potentially where the facilities are not available for its rehabilitation.

Differences need to be considered when performing first aid; unlike domestic dogs, fox casualties may well have been suffering from starvation, dehydration and hypothermia for some time before being admitted. Specific guidance, particularly for the rehydration of fox casualties, is laid out in the article. The authors also identify issues with calculating doses according to similarly sized dogs and provide a detailed table identifying the anaesthetics and analgesics suitable for use in foxes, with appropriate dosages.

The authors also identify, in detail, the specific approaches vet practices can take in dealing with the most commonly encountered conditions in casualty foxes, including trauma (RTC's, bite wounds and entanglements), poisoning and contamination, hydrocephalus (in fox cubs) and infectious disease (viral and bacterial infections and parasites).

The study also looks at the admission of orphaned and abandoned cubs, focussing primarily on the need for the vet to perform a detailed assessment (looking at age, body condition and behaviour) on whether the animal is genuinely orphaned or abandoned. The emphasis here is that where possible, cubs should be returned to where they were found or taken to a rehabilitation facility to be reared with other cubs. This message is further reinforced when the authors address the issue of release, another major distinguishing feature between the admission of domestic dogs and foxes. Again the need to be returned to their place of origin is emphasised or, in the case of hand-reared fox cubs, the use of a 'soft-release' approach. Additionally, key aspects of releasing casualty foxes are identified (release habitat, health and density of local fox population, landowner consent, pathogen translocation etc).

This article was abridged from the Foxes chapter in the BSAVA Manual of Wildlife Casualties (2nd edn). The citation of the paper is: Couper, D. and Bexton, S. (2012) Veterinary care of wild owl casualties. In Practice 34: 270–281. (http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/inp.i707)

*FREE ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP FOR 2018 https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1d4Puz_5lFIaT9VaYOaa_LwYmj2fsSqm58UUu9YaTPvo/edit

BWRC recording scheme – vision for a new database?

Adam Grogan BSc, MCIEEM. BWRC Trustee

The BWRC used to run a voluntary recording scheme for rehabilitators to submit data to so that some estimates could be made of the numbers of wild animals coming into wildlife centres and hospitals. This scheme fell into disuse as the number of submissions declined and as advances in technology meant that the old database software became redundant.

The BWRC is now looking at ways to reinvigorate this scheme. This would allow rehabbers to record data on their admissions, complete reports, such as the numbers of animals in care, number of species admitted, admissions compared with results and so on. We have been exploring possible options with the RSPCA and universities, and we are now at a point where we want to ask you if this is something you would be interested in.

As well as enabling rehabilitators to learn much more about how treatment may affect results, the use of centralised, web-based system could enable the BWRC to compile large scale reports that can help us when we are working with Government, or other organisations.

Practising rehabilitators in the UK please follow the web link below and give us your views (positive and negative!). You can also add your name and e-mail address at the end of the questionnaire to claim your ***FREE ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP FOR 2018**

Are We Having Fun Yet?

The following article was rediscovered recently, although we believe it was written in the 1980s by an unknown author. Food for thought?

"Caring for injured wildlife is often seen, by others, as a form of entertainment. And while we'll admit our lives are richer for having personally known each animal, very little of what we do is even remotely entertaining.

The animals we see are suffering in need of complicated and skilled care. The majority of them have been injured either directly or indirectly by the human's disrespect for the natural world. Caring for them is to immerse yourself in worry, both about the individual patient and the human disregard that has brought them to this end.

Still, people and institutions alike tend to view Wildlife Rehabilitation as a recreation, in the same cubby hole with animal sports and picnicking in the woods. And therein lies the disturbing realisation.

We as a society tend to view wildlife, in fact all of the natural world, as our toys, our playground. The most frequently given reason for concern over threatened or endangered species is that "our world" will be less rich without them, or that future generations will never feel "our joy" in having known them. Very little credence is given to it being "their world" as well, or to "their joy" in simply being alive.

Somehow, we can only understand the value of wildlife as an extension of our own sense of self-value, or if you will self-importance.

If you to come across a person lying by the side of the road injured by a hit and run driver, you would be overtaken by a complex set of welling emotions: anger, compassion, worry, concern for the person's well-being and that of his family. But never would you view the work of the ambulance team or the doctors trying to save him as entertainment. Never would you question the value of saving the person so they could go about their normal life, whatever that normal life might be.

There seems to be something basically flawed in our values, not only as they apply to rehabilitation, but with regard to all of nature outside of ourselves. We have assumed all of the rights and privileges for ourselves, seeing the rest as a playground full of toys for our use."

I believe the above article was written in the 1980's.It was passed to our patron Paul Llewellyn by Carol Scott, and I wish I knew who the original author was. Almost 40 years later, the concerns raised are still sadly relevant. Wildlife rescue seems to be more popular than ever today, with some species being more popular than others. Why do people get involved? The responsibilities are huge - the individual's welfare, the welfare of the host population through potential negative ecological impact from translocation, pathogen pollution, increased competition and displacement to mention just a few. How many people know what happens to their released animals? After all, we cannot simply equate release to success and we may be causing more suffering than we are trying to resolve. So the question still remains – are we still having fun?

Simon Allen, BWRC & Gower Bird Hospital

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If you would like to submit an article or letter for publication or give a presentation at a future symposium please contact
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